



**U.S. AMBASSADOR TO ALBANIA HERMAN  
BERNSTEIN – A MODEL OF DISTINGUISHED  
DIPLOMACY  
(English)**



***As a diplomat, I have learned from Herman Bernstein  
that everything we write, even the notes we scribble and  
the business cards we exchange, are important records  
to be preserved.***

**Mal Berisha**

**Herman Bernstein** was born on September 21, 1876 in a village named “Vladislavov” in Russian, called “Neustadt-Schirwindt” in German or “Naishtot” in Hebrew, located between the borders of Russia and Germany in today’s Lithuanian territory. He is the son of David and Marie Bernstein. His family immigrated to the United States in 1893. He studied in the States and married Sophie Friedman in 1901. His father was a Talmud scholar but died when Herman was a young boy. *He was assigned as the United States Ambassador to Albania by the 31<sup>st</sup> US President Herbert Hoover. He served in Albania from February 1930 to September 1933, during a period marked by Albania’s struggle under King Zog to maintain its independence between Italy and Yugoslavia.*

The activity of Herman Bernstein goes far beyond of the work of a journalist, traveller, writer, political analyst or historian. Bernstein, as one of the educated elite of his times, played a historic role despite the fact that he was not a politician. He wrote a series of books including:

*The Flight of Time, In the Gates of Israel, Contrite Hearts, Celebrities of Our Time, The Road to Peace, The History of a Lie, With Master Minds, Willy – Nicky Telegrams, Herbert Hoover – The Man Who Brought America to the World.* He translated a number of important literary works by figures such as Maxim Gorky, Leonid Andreyev, Leo Tolstoy and Ivan Turgenev, from Russian into English.

While traveling through Russia and Europe, he interviewed some of the greatest men of his time. The interviews, with commentary, were published in a book entitled *With Master Minds*:

In his introduction he writes:

*“It has been my good fortune to interview some of the master minds of Europe—the foremost authors, scientists, philosophers, statesmen and artists. I hope I have given to the reader the*

*prophetic earnestness of Leo Tolstoy, the zeal and optimism of Elio Metchnikoff, the brilliant whimsicalities of George Bernard Shaw, the clever statesmanship of Count Sergius Witte, the keen penetration of Professor Henry Bergson, the passionate power of Leonid Andreyev, the analytical force of Harden, the love of the beautiful of August Rodin, the fearless progressiveness of Havelock Ellis, the many sided erudition of Maxime Kovalevsky, and the quaint philosophy of the Sheikh-Ul-Islam.”*

**Bernstein, a friend of three US Presidents, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Herbert Hoover**

What makes this publication more important is the foreword of Theodore Roosevelt, then a former US President (1901-1909), who wrote the following letter to Bernstein on November 6, 1917:

*My dear Bernstein,*

*I congratulate you on the noteworthy service you have rendered by the discovery and publication of these letters. They illuminate with a glare like a flashlight, the dark places of diplomacy of despots; they show what diplomacy in autocratic nations really is and what it has done and sought to do, right up to the present time. Let me repeat, my dear sir, that in publishing these letters you have rendered a signal service to this nation and to all mankind.*

*Very sincerely yours*

*Theodore Roosevelt*

In 1919 Bernstein went to Paris with the American Delegation as a journalist. He reported from Paris for many American newspapers. The story of the Paris Peace Conference is very important for Albania and is entirely linked to the position of the United States, represented by President Wilson and to the contributions of an American missionary, Charles Telford Erickson. It was

Charles Telford Erickson who informed President Wilson in daily briefs about Albania's history and why it was facing that situation

In 1929 Herbert Hoover became the 31<sup>st</sup> President of the United States and would serve until 1933. It is worth mentioning that President Hoover had served as the Secretary of Commerce from 1921 to 1928. In 1925 he gave a donation of 10,000 US dollars on the condition of anonymity (because it was considered a conflict of interest) for the Agricultural School of Kavaja in Albania, soon to be established by Charles Erickson. Bernstein wrote his book *The Man who Brought America to the World dedicated to President Hoover*.

### **BERNSTEIN — AMERICAN MINISTER IN ALBANIA**

After such an excellent carrier, Bernstein assumed his position as American Minister to the Albanian Kingdom on February 17, 1930. He presented his letters of credence to King Zog of Albania on April 28, 1930 and relinquished on September 24, 1933.

Bernstein explains in his diplomatic reports why Albania is referred as the most dangerous zone of Europe where a war is likely to start. He gives a picture of the country in such a beautiful way: "Albania has been called 'Europe's Forgotten Land,' 'Cinderella among the Nations,' 'Land of the Paradox,' 'Key to the Adriatic,' and 'the Belgium of the Balkans. He writes:

*"Albania's history dates back to the pre-Christian era. The city of Durazzo, known ancient times as Durrahium, is twenty-seven centuries old. The Albanians are believed to have descended from the ancient Illyrians. Alexander the Great of Macedon was a son of an Albanian princess. The town of Butrint, in Southern Albania, where recent excavations brought back age-old scenes immortalized by Virgil, has a remarkable amphitheater more than two thousand years old. Feniks Hill near Saranda in Southern Albania is surrounded by series of massive walls which makes the place one of the most highly fortified and largest acropolises of the classic world. The tribes of Epirus, the Greeks, the Romans, the Slavs, and finally the Turks took*

*possession of Albania and endeavoured to suppress the people by imposing their own nationalities, languages, and customs upon the sturdy mountaineers, but without complete success. Even the five hundred years of Turkish rule, during which they were forced to embrace Muhammadanism, did not thwart the indomitable spirit of independence among the North Albanian mountaineers, and notwithstanding the most drastic suppression of Albanian schools, books and newspapers, the Albanian language has survived.”*

### **Reasons why Albania has lost faith in the Italians?**

Bernstein was very concerned about the influence of Duçe on Albania and his dreams to expand the Italian territories beyond the Adriatic Sea on the east. In a large article, he tackles many subjects of Albanian-Italian relations.

Bernstein remarked “Why is Italy so eager to restore cordial collaboration with Albania, to pour vast sums of money into the little country? The answer is that Albania, by geographical position, holds the keys to the Adriatic.

### **Bernstein on Albanian Religious Tolerance – A Pilgrimage to St. Johns Vladimir’ Church in Elbasan.**

Bernstein went to Elbasan to attend a ceremony at the Orthodox Monastery. He described the ceremony being attended by Christians, Muslims and Bektashis alike. It showed perhaps the first and the only case in the world where people of the same nation of different religions attended such an interesting ceremony together.

### **Bernstein – The first biographer of King Zog I of Albania,**

Bernstein wrote, “***The life story of the Albanian ruler, told by himself in the third person.***” *The story is, as one would expect, flattering but it is not by any means a work of historical accuracy. Nonetheless, it provides an insight into how King Zog viewed himself and his country’s history and development”.*

### **Bernstein e Great Diplomat**

During his appointment, he worked on negotiation and extradition treaties between the U.S. and Albania. Two of these treaties were bilaterally signed

during his time as Ambassador in Tirana, Albania. Bernstein also received an award from King Zog for his service to Albania, the Grand Cordon of the Order of Skanderbeg.

### ***Bernstein and King Zog speak about a possible Jewish Enclave in Albania***

*King Zog and Ambassador Bernstein spoke about the possibility of establishing a Jewish enclave in Albanian territory. In that time when Jews all over Europe were being faced with Nazi racism, Bernstein wanted to do something to create a safe haven for a significant number of Jews. Herman Bernstein was on good terms with King Zog.*

### ***Bernstein was interested on the Albanian Archaeology***

Bernstein was much interested in archaeological discoveries. He had a personal acquaintance with the Italian archaeologist Luigi Maria Ugolini. Later on, the impressive remains of a fifth or sixth-century synagogue were uncovered by the Albanian Academy of Sciences and the Hebrew University Institute of Archaeology. The archaeologists discovered that the synagogue underwent various periods of use, including its conversion into a church at its final stage.

### ***Eloquent speeches of Herman Bernstein***

On the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of George Washington – Bernstein addresses to an audience as follows:

*“It is my privilege to celebrate this historic occasion in Albania whose people suffered and struggled so long before they have attained their independence, and whose own hero, Scanderbeg, was one of the world’s greatest personalities both as a leader of men and as a champion of his people’s independence. To celebrate the bicentennial birthday of George Washington it is my honor and pleasure to dedicate the seeds of tree brought from Mount Vermont the home of Washington, and plant them in Albanian soil, on the grounds of American Legation.”*

### ***A day of work – Tirana as I see from the window of my office***



This piece was published by the editor of the American Foreign Service Association:

*“From the windows of the new American Legation in Tirana one can see many quaint and fascinating sights which present a picture of Albanian life in all its variegated colours and shades ... In front of the Legation gates, the new road leads from Durazzo to Elbasani and Kortcha. Durazzo on the Adriatic is the most important sea port. Built about 700 years before the Christian era, known in the past as Dyrrhachium, it witnessed scenes of glory, of bloody battles, of the conflicts between the armies of Caesar and Pompey, and of Crusaders on their way to Holy Land. It is believed that there, too, St. Paul preached Christianity. America is popular in Albania for several reasons. Albania is grateful to America for the late President Wilson’s aid given to the cause of Albanian independence at a very critical period during the Peace Conference. Other reasons for Albania’s appreciation of America are the American Schools in Tirana and Kavaja, conducted by the American Red Cross and Near East Foundation and malaria work of the Rockefeller Foundation.”*

### **Friend of Albanian Intellectuals:**

Bernstein had strong relations with Albanian intellectuals. Lef Nosi, a Christian orthodox from Elbasan, had promised Bernstein to give him a script of Jewish history or their historical presence in his town. He perused the manuscripts of Evliya Çelebi, a famous Turkish traveler who recorded everything during his trip to Albania in the sixteenth century. Lef Nosi provided evidence of the Jews who were mostly sojourners in the city of Elbasan. Bernstein had strong relations and correspondence with At (Father) Gjergj Fishta, the Albanian Homer of modern times. Fishta was a Catholic priest, a writer, and a poet. He gave Bernstein a copy of the *Code of Lek Dukagjini* that presents the Albanian *BESA* as the foundation of the nation’s high morality. He also had relations with Terenc Toci, a tragic figure from the Albanian diaspora of Italy who went to Albania to help the liberation of his ancestor’s country and who was eventually executed by the communists. He had relations with Alexander Moisi and translated his drama “The Prisoner,” from German into

English together with his daughter Dorothy Nash. In other occasions, we will see how strongly he was connected to Faik Konica, a famous Albanian writer and the homologue of Bernstein in Washington DC at the same time.

For his contribution on strengthening US American Relations was decorated by His Majesty, King Zog of Albania. He was one of the few to receive the Star and Knight's cross of the Order of Skanderbeg.

## **Conclusion**

Bernstein is an important figure for Albanian–American Relations. He advocated for the small country, learning about its history and culture, writing articles about its history, helping to open schools, and warning the world about its tragic future.





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FOR JEWISH RESEARCH**

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Albanian-Jewish Relations and the Contributions of U.S. Ambassador to  
Albania, Herman Bernstein (1876-1935)

December 14, 2014

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14 | 1:00pm**

**RUTH GAY SEMINAR IN JEWISH STUDIES**

Herman Bernstein, 1929.

**Ambassador Mal Berisha**, Ambassador of the Republic of Albania to the  
United Kingdom and Ireland

**Admission:** Free

**RSVP Required:** [yivo.org/reservations](http://yivo.org/reservations) | (212) 294-8301 x5167

How did Albania save its Jews during the World War II? By the end of the War, Albania had tripled its Jewish population, sheltering Jews from Austria, Germany, and Yugoslavia. Since then, many U.S. organizations, as well as Albanian politicians, scholars, and ordinary individuals, have made

efforts to disclose this history to the world. In this talk, **Ambassador Mal Berisha** focuses on a small part of this fascinating story: the life and work of U.S. Ambassador Herman Bernstein (1930-1933), his work championing positive Albanian-Jewish relations, and the implications of his efforts for Albanian Jews during WWII.

*The Ruth Gay Seminar in Jewish Studies was established in 2008 in honor of Ruth Gay (1922-2006), the noted American Jewish historian and writer, with a generous gift from the family of Ruth Gay. The seminar series is given by scholars who have conducted research in the YIVO Archives and wish to share their work with the public. For inquiries related to Ruth Gay Seminars, please contact Senior Archivist, Fruma Mohrer, at [fmohrer@yivo.cjh.org](mailto:fmohrer@yivo.cjh.org) or (212) 294-6143.*

**Ambassador Mal Berisha** is Ambassador of the Republic of Albania to the United Kingdom and presented his letters of credence to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II on June 27, 2013; he is also Ambassador non-resident to Ireland. Ambassador Berisha previously served as a General Consul at the General Consulate of Albania in Istanbul and as General Director of the Consular Department and then of the Department of Regional Affairs and Initiatives at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana. Before working for the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Ambassador Berisha joined the Pan Albanian Federation of America, Vatra in 1998, contributing to the extensive efforts of Albanian Americans to resolve the Kosovo question. Ambassador Berisha is also a history scholar and has published many books and articles on Albanian history and culture. His latest publication, *Charles Telford Erickson, A Life Dedicated to Albania* (2012), in Albanian, is an extensive monograph on the life and work of the early 20th century American missionary, Charles Telford Erickson. He has also published articles and given talks on Jewish life in Albania and Jewish Albanian relations internationally.

Venue: YIVO Institute at the Center for Jewish History | 15 West 16th Street – NYC [view map](#)

For directions and parking information, [click here](#).

*All public programs are wheelchair accessible. A limited number of assistive listening devices are available for deaf and hard of hearing individuals upon request.*

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## Mal Berisha in Boston: “A Promise and a People: The Albanian Jews and the Holocaust”

JANUARY 30, 2017, 10:45 PM |

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Rudina Hoxha  
Rudina Hoxha is a



  
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**Outpost legalization bill**

Following the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, a special event, co-sponsored by the Jewish Caucus, Israel Caucus, and European Club, featuring Mr. Mal Berisha, a distinguished Albanian ambassador of career, is going to bring the Albanian – Jewish History to the fore.

This event, open to the public, is entitled “A Promise and a People: The Albanian Jews and the Holocaust.” It will be held on February 1, at 7 p.m. in the premises of Harvard Kennedy School (Starr Auditorium, Belfer Building,


Second Floor, John F. Kennedy School of Government, 79 John F Kennedy St.  
Cambridge, MA 02138.)



*The Jewish and Israel Caucuses, student organizations at the Harvard Kennedy School, invite you to a talk and discussion:*

**A Promise and a People: The Albanian Jews and the Holocaust**

**Speaker:**  
**Ambassador Mal Berisha**  
*Former Ambassador of  
Albania to the United  
Kingdom*



**Moderated by Christopher Lydon**  
*Radio Open Source, WBUR*

7pm, Wednesday, February 1st, 2017  
Starr Auditorium, Belfer Building, Second Floor  
John F. Kennedy School of Government  
79 John F. Kennedy St, Cambridge, MA 02138

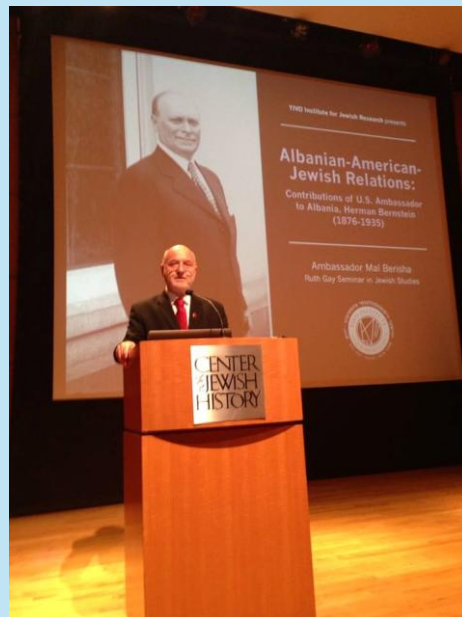
Albania, the only Muslim-majority country in Europe, emerged from the atrocities of the Holocaust with a tenfold increase in its pre-war Jewish population. Based on the highest moral values of “BESA”, the Code of Honor for Albanians, thousands of Jews were sheltered unconditionally by ordinary people, mostly in rural areas of the country, the announcement explains.

During this presentation, Mr. Mal Berisha, a writer and a seasoned diplomat (the last posting was an Ambassador of Albania to the United Kingdom), is expected to examine the political, cultural, and historical accounts through the eyes of a Jewish American Ambassador to Albania, the Monarch of Albania, and everyday Albanians who risked their lives to come to the help of fleeing Jews.

Ambassador Berisha will offer remarks, followed by a moderated discussion and Q&A with journalist and public radio host, Christopher Lydon (Radio Open Source, WBUR).

“If there is a single Gentile nation that has the right to commemorate, being proud of its history of the time of Holocaust, that is the Albanian Nation. To

remember that Day, I have the honor and privilege to hold this presentation, Mr. Mal Berisha said earlier this week via a posting to his official Facebook.



In 2014, Berisha presented his first English book in Manhattan at the YIVO Institute of Jewish Studies in New York City and the US Embassy in London: “Herman Bernstein, US Ambassador to Albania” where he detailed the close relations between Jews, Albanians and the United States Government. The work of the U.S. Ambassador to Albania, Herman Bernstein (1930-1933), championed positive Albanian-Jewish relations.

This book raised a lot of interest but even more the fascinating spectrum he found to explore the relations between the Albanians and the Jews.

Ambasador Berisha, KCFO, has served as the Ambassador of the Republic of Albania to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Ireland from 2012 to 2015. Previously Berisha served as General Consul of Albania to Istanbul from 1993-1997.

Berisha has graduated from the Academy of Arts of Albania. His life has been tightly linked with cultural anthropology in Albania. He is a history scholar and has published a number of books and articles about various subjects of history, culture and diplomacy.

Source: <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/mal-berisha-in-boston-a-promise-and-a-people-the-albanian-jews-and-the-holocaust/>

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# **BOAZ NASH – GREAT-GRANDSON OF AMBASSADOR HERMAN BERNSTEIN, MEETS IN TIRANA WITH HIS GREAT-GRANDFATHER’S BIOGRAPHER, MAL BERISHA**



**By Tirana Times, September 8, 2017**

A special person was the guest of the U.S. Embassy this week. It was the U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Nash is the great-grandson of Herman Bernstein who served as U.S. Ambassador to Albania from 1930 to 1933. According to the Embassy, the Embassy gave Boaz a tour of his great-grandfather’s former residence and workplace.

Exactly the significant impact that Herman Bernstein left on the development of U.S.–Albania relations has long attracted the interest of the distinguished Albanian diplomat, Mr. Mal Berisha, who has authored a book on the subject. The book, titled Herman Bernstein, US Ambassador to Albanina Kingdom, 1930-



1933 is the result of Mr. Berisha's long, systematic, and dedicated research. It sheds light on the connections between the remarkable U.S.–Jewish figure, Herman Bernstein, and Albania.

The book, which will feature a selection of Mr. Bernstein's most significant writings and his diplomatic activity in Albania, is expected to be published soon. This was confirmed by the author on his official Facebook account. "Only a few weeks remain until the publication of my book on the life of U.S. Ambassador Herman Bernstein (1930–1933), prepared under the editorial care of Prof. Dr. Bardhyl Musaj," announced Mr. Berisha.

But that is not all. On the eve of the book's publication, Mr. Berisha had the unique opportunity to meet with Mr. Boaz Nash.

"As a rare gift, precisely on the eve of the book's publication, came the meeting with Bernstein's great-grandson, the scientist Boaz Nash, who was referred by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York. The meeting was arranged with the support of the U.S. Embassy in Tirana," the well-known diplomat wrote in his Facebook post.

### **Mal Berisha and Boaz Nash**

According to the Ambassador, "this was an ideal opportunity not only to learn more about Boaz, but also to share with him many things he wished to know about his ancestors."

"The grandmother of Boaz, the daughter of Herman Bernstein, called Dorothy, was married with his grandfather, Actius Nash, a student from France on October 17, 1930. The wedding ceremony was conducted at the Tirana Municipality with the blessing of the then mayor, Rexhep Jella.

Dorothy was also a co-translator of Aleksander Moisiu's drama *I Burgosuri* (*The Prisoner*), originally written in German and dedicated to Napoleon Bonaparte. More about Herman Bernstein and his great-grandson, Boaz Nash, will be revealed in the upcoming book, which is set to be published very soon.

**“Proud to be Albanian,” concludes the diplomat.**

Shortly after his meeting with the Albanian diplomat, Boaz Nash expressed his appreciation for Mr. Berisha’s efforts in documenting the life of his great-grandfather and his deep connections with Albania and the Jewish people.

*“It was an honor and a pleasure to meet Mr. Berisha in Tirana. This was my first visit to Albania, and I hope to have another opportunity to return. I greatly appreciate Mr. Berisha’s efforts to shed light on my great-grandfather’s history, particularly in relation to Albania and its ties with the Jewish people. I look forward to the publication of his book and hope to read an English translation someday!”* he said.

*“To give an idea of Mr. Bernstein, I must say that he was a friend of three U.S. Presidents—Theodore Roosevelt (1901–1909), Woodrow Wilson (1913–1921), and Herbert Hoover (1929–1933). He interviewed some of the most renowned figures in the world, including Leo Tolstoy, Leon Trotsky, Auguste Rodin, George Bernard Shaw, Sigmund Freud, and Aleksander Moisiu. Above all, he shared a personal friendship with Albert Einstein.”*

Note: Mr. Berisha is distinguished by the unique topics he chooses to explore in his books. He has captured public attention through his soft-spoken articulation of complex issues and his expert-driven approach to Albania’s diplomatic relations. His insights have been featured in most major national news outlets, as well as in international media.

## Story Highlights

- Jonathan Brent, Ph.D., the Executive Director and CEO of The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, underlined in an exclusive interview with Tirana Times that the story of the first U.S. Ambassador to Albania, Herman Bernstein, told by the Albanian diplomat and scholar, Mr. Mal Berisha, at YIVO Institute in 2014 represented a wonderful opportunity for YIVO to demonstrate the depth and the purpose of its archives and why these old documents can inspire people around the world today. “It was a signal event and I wish we could have another like before too long,” Brent said about the first lecture on Albanian-Jewish Relations, held in this Institute by the Albanian diplomat of career. The 68-year old American academic, author, and publisher said that his feeling is that not enough of Albanian-Jewish history is known to the general public and that soon another event is held to go deeper on that issue. He said that since in the early years of communism, he was impressed by the humanness, speech and behavior of the Albanians.



*Ambassador Mal Berisha, Simon Schama, Jonathan Brent at YIVO's London Salon in 2014*

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### **What comes to your mind when you hear the word “Albania”?**

Many years ago, my first associations with the word “Albania” would have been with the regime of Enver Hoxha and the ultra-Stalinist state over which he presided, but as my interests in Eastern Europe and Russia developed, and because of my position in the 1990s as Editorial Director of Yale University Press, I got to host a group of publishing colleagues from newly established, post-communist Albania. I did not discover strident and ideologically driven individuals. Rather, I was impressed with their knowledge of the world, their commitment to scholarship, and most of all the humanness of their bearing, speech, and behavior. The three editors with whom I met possessed a mildness of manner and speech that struck me as very special and I wanted, through them, to learn more about Albanian history and culture. Yet it took my coming to YIVO to learn more about the deep humanity of Albanian society and its extraordinary history during the Holocaust. My feeling is that not enough of this history is known to the general public.

**What is the place Albania holds at YIVO Institute? Do you think Albania could be a model for other countries to follow?**

Through the extensive archive of Herman Bernstein, which is part of YIVO's core collection, Albania has very special place at YIVO. It represents a rare confluence of American, East European and Balkan Jewish history. Bernstein was born in Lithuania but grew up in the United State of America; then, as a diplomat, he was posted to Albania where his work on behalf of the Jewish people and the American government flourished. The story that Ambassador Mal Berisha has told of Bernstein's activity is truly inspiring and **should** be a model for humanity worldwide. It is a story to encourage all people of goodwill in dark times.

**December 14, 2014. His Excellency, Ambassador of Albania in the UK, Mal Berisha held a lecture at YIVO Institute on Albanian-Jewish Relations while he keeps promoting this topic in different events. What do you remember from that evening? In your view, how did this event contribute to the world enlightening about Albania's key role in the Holocaust times?**

I was delighted to introduce Ambassador Berisha at this lecture. I remember his affability, his knowledge, his desire to demonstrate the inherent humanity of Albanian society and the Albanian people; but most of all I remember that the story he told was virtually unknown to almost everyone in the audience. The evening represented a wonderful opportunity for YIVO to demonstrate the depth and the **purpose** of its archives and why these old documents can inspire people around the world today. It was a signal event and I wish we could have another like before too long.

**How do you see the role of Jewish communities in US or different parts of the world?**

This is a difficult question because the Jews of the Diaspora are inherently bound up in the political and social life of the nations to which they belong; whereas, the Jews of Israel are bound up in the immediate problems facing Israel today. Furthermore, there is no ONE Jewish community. There are

many: The German, the Sephardic, the Ashkenazi, the Italian, etc. and within these communities there are the religious, the ultra-religious, the secular, and the indifferent. There are many reasons to acknowledge the bonds that tie Jewish communities together—bonds of memory, religion, history, language—but there are many other reasons to see Jews as individuals who are not necessarily bearing the values or attitudes of larger communities. My grandfather, every Pesach, would say a prayer: “I pray that God grant me a beautiful soul.” I can think of nothing better to aspire to.

**What are your thoughts on the current state of the U.S.-Israel relationship and strategic partnership?**

I think that the U.S. can and should continue to play a stabilizing and moderating role in Israeli foreign policy and domestic life. It is a vital strategic partnership for world peace, but it is also essential for the continuity of the Jewish people. But what does continuity mean? Too often we think solely in terms of physical security and not enough about the moral and spiritual life of the people.

**What is the next exciting project of YIVO? Something on Albania?**

I wish I could say that YIVO’s next exciting project involves Albania and the Balkans; however, we are now concentrating our efforts to preserve, conserve and digitize all of YIVO’s pre-War collections that were miraculously saved from destruction in World War II by the Nazis. Among these materials there may well be some documents pertaining to life in Albania. After this, we hope to launch a new project to build an YIVO Online Museum. In this Online Museum there will be a special gallery for Albania.